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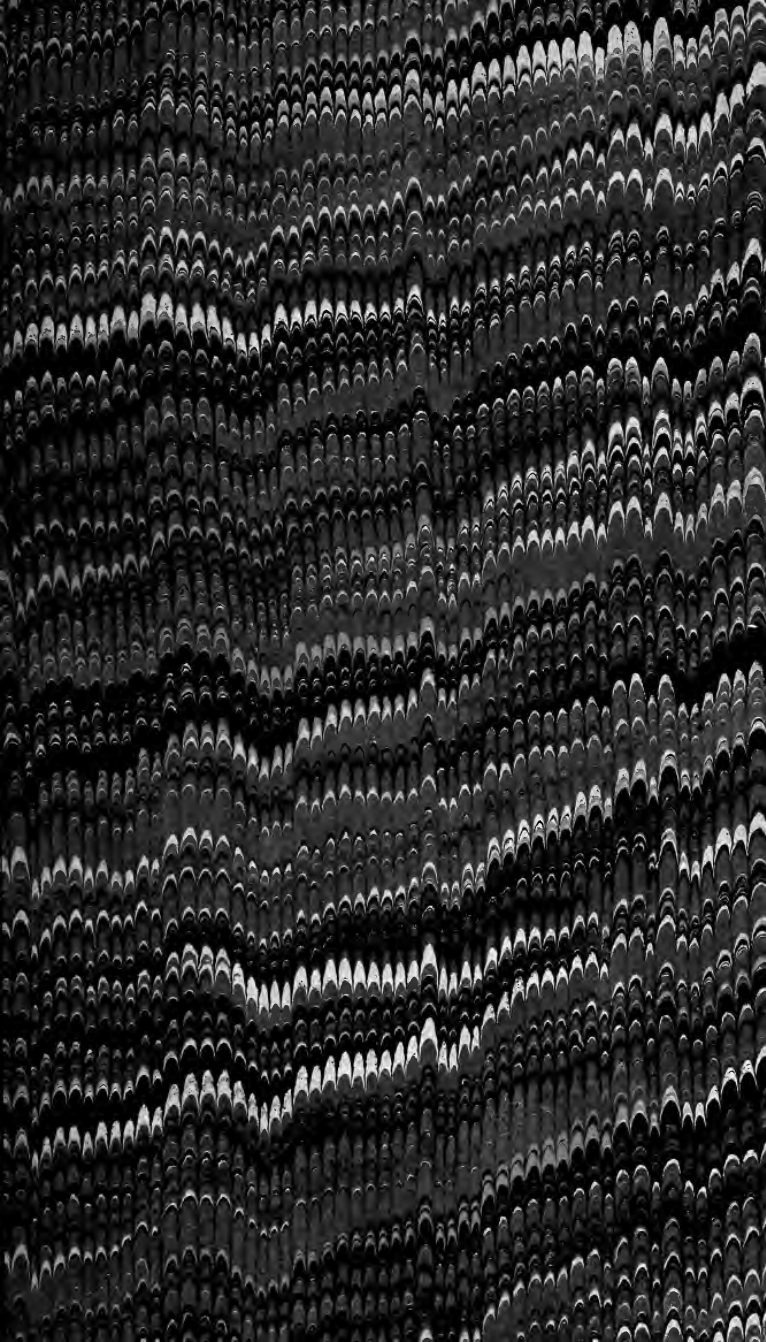

ERIN.

"When other nations were swept by the tide of war, when discord and darkness like thickening clouds settled upon them, she was blessed with peace, prosperity, and light! From her secluded seats of learning and of grace she sent her heralds and ministers abroad to illuminate the world. Cruel reverses indeed, and protracted periods of disaster, it has been her fate to endure; but again in our latter day she has emerged, in some degree, from the abasement to which a cowardly tyranny had consigned her, and by the union and energy of her sons aspires with a boldness, promising success, to the dignity of her ancient national independence."—JAMES HOBAN.

"Many of thine this better could than I,
But for their powers accept my piety."—JONSON.

WASHINGTON:
1843.

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NOTE.

The historical facts of the following verses may be found in *O'Connell's Memoir on Ireland, Moore's History of Ireland, Beauties of the Shamrock, and Hoban's Gems of Irish Eloquence*, to which generally the reader is referred.

ERIN.

PART I.

"Where Judgment sits clear-sighted, and surveys
The chain of Reason with unerring gaze;
Where Fancy lives, and to the brightening eyes,
His fairer scenes, and bolder figures rise;
Where social Love exerts her soft command,
And plays the passions with a tender hand,
Whence every virtue flows, in rival strife,
And all the moral harmony of life."—THOMSON.

Ab uno disce omnes.—VIRGIL.

ERIN.

I.

"'Tis MINE !" sweet FREEDOM said, the while
She fondly gazed on ERIN's ISLE.

The snowy billows danced around
The blooming shore, with music sound ;
The breeze awoke, and merrily,
And lightly, flew from tree to tree,
And all, with graceful bending head,
Gave welcome, wheresoe'er it sped.
And silver stream, and lake, and rill,
And shadowy dale, and sunny hill,
And flow'rets waving to and fro,
With softer charms began to glow !

II.

'Tis eve :—the light is fading now
From yonder mountain's rugged brow,
And long and dark the shadows rest
Upon KILLARNEY's gentle breast,
And slow, 'mid many a mossy rock,
The happy Shepherd drives his flock.

How dear the evening hour to him,
Ye well may know—his eye is dim
With tears—the blissful tears of joy,
As first he sees his rosy boy

Impatient come, with rapid feet,
His sire to kiss, embrace, and greet—
In simple phrase, and lisping strain—
Right welcome to his home again!

And yet the shepherd onward moves,
And now the cot, and all he loves,
And all his heart would e'er possess,
At once unite to sooth and bless!

III.

But still the Pagan altar stood,
And chanting MAGI roamed the wood,
And hymns and prayers addressed the moon,
The twinkling stars—the orb of noon;—
And Superstition's pilgrims came,
And knelt around the sacred flame:—
And yet, when darkness veiled the sky,
The robber prowled insidious by,
And sudden fell the crimson knife,
And groaned in blood the parting life!
The fiend of war in fury rose,
And friends and relatives were foes,
And oft the verdant plain was red,
From noble veins of Erin's dead!
Till ONE resigned his native land,
Obeying GOD's appointing hand,
And spread the daring sail, and passed
The angry waves—the threat'ning blast—
And smiled at Ocean's surly roar,
And raised the Cross on Erin's shore!

The shout and groan of battle cease,
And Truth is born, and Love, and Peace!
And sacred songs of joy arise
To HIM who formed the earth and skies.

The Arts, the Sciences appear,
And rove the Isle, improve, and cheer.
Among the hills, the dales a-down,
As if by magic, village, town,
With tower, and dome, majestic start,
With crowded port, and busy mart.
And sculptured walls of Abbeys gleam,
Through bending trees, by many a stream.

The Saint beheld, with holy pride,
And gave the praise to God—and died.

And years and years have rolled away,
But still they hail the happy day,
In early time of timid Spring;
And shout aloud his name, and sing,
With quivering lips, a glowing song,
The hills, the dales, and shores along!

'Blow, freely blow, ye winds of March,
And wave, ye banners fair,
And peal, ye joyous trumpet tones,
Through all the sunny air!
Be glad, ye hearts of valiant men,
Ye rosy maidens smile,
And welcome back to memory
The Saint of Erin's Isle.

Thou ancient harp of many strings,
So eloquent of yore,
Remember *now* thy glories past,
And charm the world once more!
Come Beauty, virgin Beauty, come,
With sacred song the while,
And hail, ye lisping children, hail
The Saint of Erin's Isle.

'Tis sweet to see the summer sun
From clouds of darkness dart:
'Tis sweet to feel his brilliant beams
Revive the drooping heart:—
'Twas thus, when hover'd Night around,
And Grief, and Hate, and Guile,
A sudden splendor shone sublime—
The Saint of Erin's Isle!

And hark! the hills and dales resound
With virtue's angel song,
And shine the Cross and Shamrock green,
'Mid all the grateful throng.
Ten thousand voices proudly join—
Ten thousand sweet lips smile—
Glory to God! and praise to *him*,
The Saint of Erin's Isle!

IV.

The scene is changed. With hair of white,
And bending form, and withered sight,
On a rude rock, where rolls the sea,
Forever wild, forever free,
A lonely minstrel sits and sings,
And strikes the melancholy strings.

It was not age that stole his bloom,
And prophecied the darksome tomb,
But care—the busy fiend of thought—
A sudden change untimely wrought.

His faltering voice, and trembling hand,
The minstrel may no more command,
For hark! he pours a plaintive song,
That bears his raptured soul along:—
It tells—alas! that such should be
His *own* despairing history!—

The pride, the hope of early love,
When, timid as the woodland dove,
The heart will droop away with grief,
Revive—and sink at stir of leaf,
Or passing breeze, or insect call—
Though pure itself, yet fearing all!
And this the love of CAROLAN,
When first his life of love began.
But *she*, whose brightly-tender eyes
Gave grace anew to earth and skies—
And *she* for whom 'twas joy to live—
For whom his *life* 'twere bliss to give—
A cruel heart, an icy hand,
Had borne her from her native land!
And years went by, and blindness came,
But still his *soul* remained the same,
And still he loves, though never more
She gaily tread her daisied shore.

The gladsome sun at last up-rose,
And seemed to mock the minstrel's woes:—
He felt the beam he could not see—
He *smiled*—and bent him instantly,
And struck the friendly harp again,
To lose the memory of pain:—
The morning sun brought back to him
A morning, ere his eye was dim,
When she—he strove to chase away
The brilliant past—the dark to-day!

The dash of oars—a boat—more near—
'Tis safely moored—a maid is here—
She lightly glides along the strand—
Her fingers touch the minstrel's hand—
He starts—the magic touch is known—
'Oh, God! my loved! my lost! my own!'

V.

A flowery plain—a winding stream—
Surrounding trees, that scarce the beam
Of setting sun may enter there—
A group of men, and maidens fair,
And ancient dames, who still remember
The May of life in life's December;
With yet a laughter-loving glance,
And voice of wit, and joy of dance,
And longing wish to hear or tell
The changing fate that once befell
A gallant knight and fair "*ladye*,"
In golden climes, beyond the sea:—
Or other tales—and sweeter still!
When fairies meet, a-down the hill,
And moon and stars are shining bright,
To give the "little people" light,
As round and round, so quick and gay,
They sport the silent hours away!

But now we leave the fairy pleasure—
And now we view a *mortal* measure;
And simple song alone may be
The simple peasants' melody.

Oh ye, of grave and formal mind!
With souls to stupid books resigned,
And hearts that prove no variation,
But rise and fall—*in calculation!*—
I call ye from your dark retreating,
To view a merry peasant meeting!

Behold the smiling youth advance—
Behold the blushing virgin glance—
And see her bend those lily arms
Above her budding bosom's charms,

As fain to hide the beauty there—
With beauty quite as soft and fair!
And thus she glides with buoyant motion,
As floats a flower on summer ocean.

The dance! the dance! and age, the while,
Hath borrowed youth's enchanting smile;
For joy can give an honest face—
Though old and rough—a peerless grace!

'Tis o'er,—and on the velvet grass
Is seated many a lad and lass,
While wit, abundant wit, is heard,
And laughter greets the brilliant word.

But *two*—and *lovers* they, I ween—
No more adorn the gleesome scene;—
When none observed, they stole apart—
Retirement suits the amorous heart!—
And slow they move (I'd like to know
Why lovers *always* wander *slow?*)
Beneath the rustling oaks, that make
A pleasant shade along the lake.
And even *there* they whisper faint,
As dreading some unseen restraint.
The youth with gentle arm embraced
The modest maiden's rounded waist,
And then, mayhap, in dream of bliss,
Unconscious stole a dewy kiss!

* * * * * * *

The sun is gone, and Twilight grey
Droops mournfully o'er dying Day;
And sweet resumes the nightingale
Her pleasing, melancholy tale,
While distant, o'er the lonely hill,
Replies the plaintive whip-poor-will.

But see! the evening star appears,
Though dim, like woman's eye in tears,
And placidly the crystal stream
Reflects its ever trembling beam.

ERIN.

PART II.

"Great minds erect their never-failing trophies
On the firm base of mercy; but to triumph
Over a suppliant, by proud fortune captivated,
Argues a bastard conquest."—MASSINGER.

"Thy chains as they rankle, thy blood as it runs,
But make thee more painfully dear to thy sons!
Whose hearts, like the young of the desert bird's nest,
Drink love in each life drop that flows from thy breast."

ERIN.

I

"'Tis MINE!" said TYRANNY, the while
She fiercely gazed on ERIN's ISLE!

And clouds convened, and lightning flashed,
And high the foaming waters dashed,
With sullen sound from rock to rock,
That shook, alarmed, at every shock!
And still the storm, above, below,
In thunder groaned the knell of woe!
The wind, that rushed along the main,
Now rent the knarled oak in twain,
And on it sped, exulting loud,
And all the mighty forest bowed.

II.

The startled shepherd hurries o'er
The blasted field, the sultry shore,
Forgets his panting sheep, that lie
Where once a brook went bubbling by;
For dreadful visions haunt his breast,
Which reason cannot sooth to rest,
And homeward speedily he wends,
And now the last high hill ascends,
And thence he fondly hopes to view—
Alas! the vision whispered true!

The crackling cottage sinks in fire—
His frantic children call their sire,
And shriek, and cast their arms in air,
And fly, or stand in mute despair!

The shepherd rushes down the hill,
With thoughts conflicting fiercer still,
Of fear and love, in madd'ning strife,
That burn or freeze the streams of life!
The voice of anguish cries again—
It wounds his breast with keener pain:—
'Come, Father! come!'
'My own ones! here!
Ye never were, till now, so dear!
But where'———
'The ball—the cruel blade—
They left her *there!*'
——An elm tree's shade
Fell gloomily around her form,
As clouds impend o'er wreck of storm;
And oh! it was an awful fate
That doomed the shepherd's lovely mate:
But true the ball, and sharp the steel,
And soldier hearts forget to feel!

Across her breast, and marble brow,
The blood was dark and clotted now,
And firm the livid lips were closed,
And dim in death her eyes reposed.
He gazed on earth, with bitter love;—
He gazed, in agony above:—
'Oh God! oh God! did'st thou, on high,
Behold the unoffending die——
So pure and true, so kind and fair——
And could'st thou still thy wrath forbear?
But come, my boys; the tears we shed,
And prayers we breathe, for pleasures fled,

Alike are vain:—be brave, my soul!
And bear the ills that mock control!
Yet bear not *all*.—Sweet Erin's Isle
Is basely trod by War and Guile;
And fainting Freedom, feebly crying,
Through clouds that veil the dead and dying,
Commands me forth, in mingling fight,
For Home and Altar, Truth and Right!'

The tramp of horse:—they speed—they speed—
And bounds with pride each foaming steed,
And glittering swords are waving there,
As if to wound the rebel air!

The shepherd falls, where brave he stood
A wreck amid a crimson flood;
And e'en his harmless boys—the earth,
That witnessed oft their scenes of mirth,
Is now—alas, the cruel doom!—
Sweet childhood's unlamented tomb!

III.

And wild and far the horsemen haste,
With reeking hands to kill and waste:—
Where waved the golden harvest wide,
The smoke ascends, the flames divide;
Where smiled the cot, or shone the hall,
A blackened pile—a tottering wall!
And Murder—Treachery, were armed,
And Hell itself shrunk back, alarmed!

IV.

Behold the aged minstrel lone
Revive his harp's enchanting tone,
And sing the song so sweet to hear
When Peace had never dreamed of Fear;

And lovely girls were round him then,
And eager children, valiant men,
Who heard, with bright, expressive smile,
The praise of Erin's happy Isle,
And then each noble heart beat high,
And rapture beamed in every eye,
And wine was poured, and legend told,
And light the laugh of pleasure rolled,
Till o'er and o'er the mingled strain
The bannered hall gave back again!
But *now*—beneath a withered tree,
The minstrel woke his melody,
Alone, at solemn close of day,
And peace and joy—where *now* were *they?*
He changed the gentle notes to wo,
And sang the march of Erin's foe—
Pale Famine's shriek, where Plenty smiled—
The altar's sacred height—defiled,—
The dead, the cold and ghastly dead,
With jesting mocked, ere life was fled—
And, undistinguished, sex and age,
The monument of tyrant rage!
His rising voice was sudden hushed—
And instantly his life-blood gushed;
He fell to earth:—
——They laugh, and swear—
They pass—and only *death* is there!

V.

Ah me! it pains the heart to tell
How deep the pride of freedom fell;
And fail my words, and droops my hand,
And feelings I cannot command
Tumultuous rise, and o'er my soul
The burning thoughts of hatred roll,
Until the lyre and simple song,
Meseem an idle task, and wrong.

Fair Erin! thou hast ever been
My love, my boast, though yet unseen
Thy rocky shores; for sweet to me
Thy legends came, in infancy,
And many a ballad, fondly sung,
Of gay romance, when time was young;
And *she* who told the varied story
Of Erin's grief, and Erin's glory,
Did *feel* its every word, in sooth,
With all the joy or woe of truth:—
And taught my eager heart the while
To know and love her native isle.
Oppression forced her forth to roam,
She braved the stormy ocean's foam,
The wind was loud—but *he* was near—
The weary wanderer rested *here*:—
America's protecting arms
Received from war's and wave's alarms.
She lived in happiness, and yet
Her island-home could ne'er forget;
She died—to me bequeathed the love
Of freedom, truth,—all *else* above!—
The hate of tyranny—and *those*—
Beyond the rest—fair Erin's foes!
It is no marvel then my lyre
And song, meseem, in vain aspire:—
For strongest thoughts, like rivers deep,
Appear enchained in sullen sleep,
Till breaks the storm along the tide—
And lo! their might, and angry pride!
While shallow brooks are noisy found,
And winds disperse their waters round!

VI.

A youth—of calm and pensive mien,
And smiling lips, and eyes serene,

Is bending o'er the wondrous page,
That tells the lore of many an age.
He stands:—how changed that gentle face!
It breathes a majesty—a grace—
A warm, enthusiastic mind—
A spirit roused—sublime, and kind!

A single thought, that strikes aright
The noble soul—the flash how bright!
How suddenly the flame ascends,
Till all in peerless glory blends!

Oh Science! beautiful art thou!
With Heaven's own star upon thy brow,
And humble dignity of worth—
To bless—alas! not *all* the Earth—
For tyrant laws my Erin doom,
And Science flies the withering gloom!

Thus stood—thus thought the youth:—again
His spirit sank with poignant pain,
But rose anon, with brighter smile—
'I die or free my sorrowing Isle!'

Brave EMMET! not for thee the task
To seize the tyrant's sword and mask,
And not for thee thy chosen maid—
But ah! the cell's funereal shade—
The taunt of wickedness and power—
The solemn toll—the awful hour—
The vulgar gaze—the scaffold height—
The dark and everlasting night!

Yet glory hovered round thy fall,
And not with life shall perish all:—
Thy voice once chilled the cruel heart,
And never shall its tones depart,

But sound afar, till Erin rise,
Direct to God her tearful eyes,
Defy the power that rules the flood,
And write thy epitaph in blood!

VII.

Nor Emmet shall inspire alone:—
Remember CURRAN, GRATTAN, TONE!
Remember those of early time,
Who died, unwept, without a crime:—
Behold! they start, from hill and plain,
The bleeding forms of heroes slain!
Behold the cot, the hall on fire—
The orphan child—the childless sire—
* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *

Strike! Strike!—and tyrants sink away
And Freedom comes, and joy, and day,
And proud ye tread, with happy smile,
Your own—your lovely ocean Isle!

END.

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